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JANET:
ONE OF MANY
BY
MRS. ELLIS.

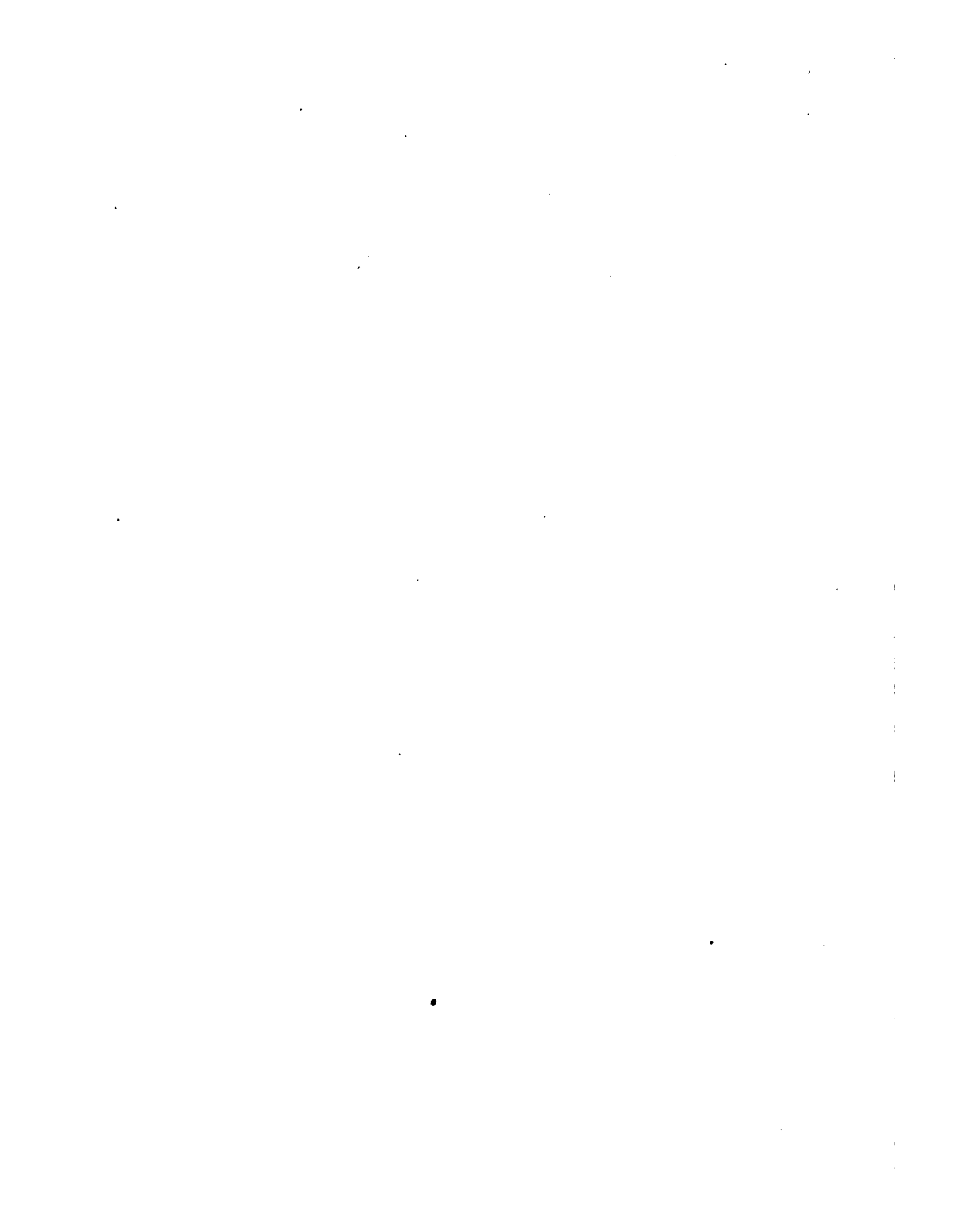


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JANET: ONE OF MANY.

A Story in Verse.

BY

MRS. ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMEN OF ENGLAND," "POETRY OF LIFE,"
"SONS OF THE SOIL," ETC.



LONDON :

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Victoria Press, (for the Employment of Women,)

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TO THE

Workers of the Victoria Press.

I HAD A DREAM, ONCE IN THE OLDEN TIME,
WHEN LIFE HAD MANY A PICTURE FAIR TO SEE,
WHEN YOUTH WITH ME WAS IN ITS GOLDEN PRIME,
AND FAITH WAS STRONG THAT WHAT I WISHED WOULD BE;
I HAD A DREAM THAT WOMAN'S HAND MIGHT WIN
HER OWN EXEMPTION FROM A THOUSAND WOES,
NOT BY HER STRIFE FOR POWER, NOR LINKED WITH THOSE
WHO PRATE OF DOING WHAT THEY NE'ER BEGIN;
BUT BY TRUE WORK TO PURCHASE HONEST BREAD,
AND THUS TO PLACE A CROWN UPON HER HEAD
OF MORE THAN BEAUTY. LO! MY DREAM HAS PROVED
A GLORIOUS FACT; AND IF THESE THOUGHTS I GIVE
TO SISTER HANDS, BY KINDRED PURPOSE MOVED,
AND IF THEY DIE NOT, 'TIS THOSE HANDS THAT MAKE THEM LIVE.



JANET: ONE OF MANY.



JANET'S YOUTH.

VILLAGE GIRL was Janet, born to share
A life of labour, and a home of care.
Happy, had young ambition never taught
Her heart to flutter with a wilder thought;
Happy, had beauty never touched her cheek,
Nor flattering lips come near, their guile to speak.

A simple child, born in a lowly cot,
Her parents' joy, the sunshine of their lot;
A merry laughter-loving thing was she,
Knowing no peace but on her father's knee.
And proud the weary workman was to hold
Close to his cheek those locks of shining gold;
And pillow that young head upon his breast,
Where oft at eve she sung herself to rest.
For music came to Janet like the song
Of woodland birds that carol all day long,
Knowing no reason why they sing, but still
Warbling untired by every grove and hill.
Nor sound alone brought happiness; for soon
She learned the joy of flowers, and summer's noon
Would find her laden, till her tiny feet
Tottered beneath the burden, rich, and sweet,
Of gems fresh culled from out the meadow grass,
Bright bells, and stars, too beautiful to pass;
And trailing sprays, and tendrils green and gay,
All fondly sought, then idly flung away.

Blythe days were those within that cottage home,
Dimmed by no shade from darker days to come;

Till the first grief which Janet ever knew
Around their hearth its dismal curtain drew.
Struck by disease, her father's manly form
Bent like a bough before the wintry storm;
And ere spring flowers their cheering promise gave,
Widow and orphan stood beside his grave.
What heavy hours came next, or what befel
Those left ones then, too many a home can tell;—
Long days of labour, nights of weary sleep,
Sharp vexing cares, with little time to weep.
So fared the widow; but the child laughed on,
In what was left forgetting what was gone;
Save for some passing moment, when no more
There came the expected footfall at the door;
Or when she tossed her pretty head aside,
Thinking to meet her father's glance of pride,
And met instead her mother's look of woe,
More sad that her young tears had ceased to flow.

But kindly thoughts run oft beside our feet,
Like rills that glide beneath where branches meet,
Hid from our sight by tangled briar and weed,
Till all at once, up-springing at our need,

We see them sparkle in the sunny ray,
And wonder how we missed them by the way.

So came such thoughts of kindness. Gentle feet
Entered the widow's cot, and voices sweet,
Tuned to the harmonies of polished life,
Spoke words that seemed with golden promise rife;
So soft the tones and looks,—so rich and rare
The costly robes which wrapped those forms so fair.

Her little soul filled with intense delight,
Janet, amazed, beheld that wondrous sight,
Gazing apart; until the ladies said
She might come near, then stroked her curly head,
And bade her be, not rude, nor coarse, nor wild,
But, as they hoped, a good, obedient child.

Good? Yes, indeed! She would have promised then
Never to sin through all her life again;
Or to sin always—'twas the same to her,
Just what those lovely ladies might prefer.

For right or wrong, as such, she cared no more
Than how the wind blew past her mother's door.
But how to please? What good would pleasing bring?
That was a different, and a serious thing.

The ladies came—it was their gracious rule,
To say that Janet must be sent to school.
They spoke of seemly dress, and manners staid,
Then left a trifle for the widow's aid.

So Janet went to school, and tried to please,
Nor tried in vain, for hers were gifts like these—
Sharp ear for catching every passing sound,
Quick eye to see what was not too profound,
Prompt will to let no good occasion slip,
With dextrous hand for skilful workmanship;
Keen sense to relish what the senses bring
Of passing pleasure from the lightest thing;
Such were the talents Janet took to school,
And well they told on those who taught by rule;
Told on those gracious ladies kind, and good,
Who laboured much, but little understood

Of how to make the infant soil give forth
The fruit they wanted, rich in real worth.

So Janet prospered in her new career,
Rising in place, and favour, year by year;
Except that sometimes, by a sudden slip,
Her rapid course would make a downward dip
Into forbidden sports, or pastimes wild.
How could such accidents befall a child
So quick to learn—so promising—so bright?
Her teachers wondered much, as well they might.
Strange fact it seemed, for even in Scripture lore
Janet stood many an older girl before;
And when the wealthy lords and ladies came
Fearful to some, she felt nor fear, nor shame;
But boldly spoke, with answer quick, and true,
What others scarce dared utter, if they knew.
And pleased the lords and ladies were to hear
How well she told about Goliath's spear,
And David's sling, with many a fact beside,
Of ancient sovereigns, when they lived, and died,

And yet, with all this knowledge aptly learned,
Her wayward feet to folly's pathway turned.

True, she was told her duty—told of heaven,
And holy things; while many a warning given
With earnest look, and solemn tone, was heard,
But heeded less than flattery's softer word.
For who in all that world of names and things,
Weights, measures, far-off places, queens, and kings,
Told Janet how, with knowledge deeper still,
To understand herself—her heart—her will?
Did friend or foe e'er whisper in her ear
What most from that young heart she had to fear?
Or how temptation in her after life,
Might come with richest, sweetest promise rife?
Might come perchance with praise, for who can tell?
That flattering unction which she loved so well—
With approbation even—words of guile
To soothe, and lure her down to guilt the while?

No; Janet went from school with honours rare,
Few were so bright, and very few so fair.

What to do next? a question strict and stern
Assailed her then. She could not always learn;
And surely menial service would not do
For one so gifted, and so favoured too.
Neighbours might talk of work: their children rude
Were meant for labour: it would do them good.
But Janet's finer fingers must not be
Soiled with the dust of vulgar drudgery.

So she made dresses, bonnets, wreaths, and caps;
Her willing mother thinking that perhaps
The gracious ladies who had seen her child,
And given her prizes, while they praised and smiled,
Knowing her cleverness, would sometimes come
And leave their orders in her lowly home.

But time passed on, and visitors were few;
Janet's gay fabrics little custom drew.
Her face more beautiful than all her flowers
Brought loiterers many through the idle hours,
But little pay, and scanty grew the fare
Mother and daughter were condemned to share.

If now and then the widow's heart was sad,
Janet had laughter for them both—so glad,
It rang like music through that little room,
Where, but for her, there had been nought but gloom.
Or when she sang beside the cottage door,
No passer-by would have believed them poor.
Still less, when dressed for show—a village belle—
Wearing the ribbons which she failed to sell;
Or wandering forth, with nothing else to do,
She gathered flowerets gay, of many a hue;
Or sate her down by rustic bridge or stile,
With those who passed, to chat and jest awhile.

Such, and so placed, was Janet in her lot,
When thus we take the thread up, to unwind
Her history, tending from her mother's cot
To distant scenes, and different moods of mind.

For verging near on woman's loveliest time,
Her form mature, and freshly-tinted cheek,
Without one shadow o'er her beauty's prime,
Her woman's portion now must Janet seek.

She sought it not where labour led the way,
Where sage advice could guide her untried feet.
Where pleasure pointed, there she loved to stray,
There fain would linger tasting but the sweet.

Fairest amid a thousand gems of beauty,
Flower amid flowers;
Dreaming no more of life's long task of duty,
Or its dark hours,
Than the young bird, its joyous matin singing
Up heaven's far height,
When first it mounts, on fearless pinion springing,
To meet the light;
Janet, the brightest where light feet were dancing,
Or welcomes smiled,
Where laughter-loving eyes were gaily glancing,
Or mirth grew wild;
Janet, the queen of many an envied treasure,
Though poor her lot,
Launched her frail bark upon the sea of pleasure,
And heeded not.

And now she sits among the hedgerow flowers,
Pouring her song forth on the sunny air;
Thoughtless, save how to charm the passing hours,
And show the world that she is wondrous fair.

Where is that boasted store of knowledge now,
Her patient teachers taught with toil and strife?
Ah! different lights are glancing o'er her brow,
It may be shadows, ere her noon of life.

It is the dawning of that day with her,
When thoughts flow fast, the thinker knows not where,
Nor whence they come. Yet frequent hopes and fears
Come rushing with them—blushes too, and tears.
Yes, even Janet now had learned to blush,
Some new-born mystery of grief to hush,
Some strange misgiving as to life, or love—
What could it be? Her future soon will prove.

Beneath the shadow of o'erarching trees
Whose topmost branches only kiss the breeze,

A verdant pathway Janet loves to tread,
Soft as the richest looms have ever spread.
Here, on a bank of moss and tangled sprays,
She sits, while chanting loud her rustic lays,
Crowning her head with flowers and tendrils green,
Laughing to think her beauty all unseen,
Wishing herself in very truth a queen.

It is not much to say that she was fair,
With cheek of bloom, and waves of auburn hair,
Golden in sunshine, mellow brown in shade,
Now bright, now dark, as lights and shadows played.
It is not much to tell of sparkling eyes,
Or arching brows, or looks of glad surprise;
To say her form was perfect, with the grace
Of girlish sweetness beaming in her face.
Ill might such trifling speak that native charm
Which made her loveliness, but wrought her harm,
A child in merry laughter, dimpling smiles,
Yet, even now, half woman in her wiles,
Janet sate singing on that summer's day
Blythe as a lambkin at its harmless play.

Enough for her the gladsome light that glowed,
Enough for her the spring of youth that flowed,
Enough the flowers that bloomed—the garlands fair,
The genial influences of earth and air;
Without a shadow on her spotless brow,
Happy, she knew not why, nor cared to know,
Janet sate singing like a jocund bird,
And all as heedless whether listener heard.

But, hark! a step steals rustling through the grass—
What traveller's foot by this lone way may pass?
A stranger, too, as Janet quickly sees,
Musing beneath the high o'erarching trees,
With book in hand, and earnest brow inclined,
Like one who reaps some harvest of the mind.

They tell us knowledge is a glorious thing,
Glorious alike for peasant or for king.
They tell us knowledge is the only cure
For all our social evils... ample... sure.

That every ill from whence our sorrows flow
Can find its remedy in this—to know.
To know, throughout creation, and its laws,
Each movement, physical effect, and cause—
Relation—chemical affinity—whate'er
Is seen or felt in ocean, earth, or air.
Sages, and caterers for the common weal,
Philanthropists, and all who kindly feel,
Are busy telling us the selfsame tale—
Knowledge is power, and knowledge must prevail.

And yet I think there was a story told
In a wise book concerning things of old,
Of one, too much in modern times forgot,
Who knew his master's will, but did it not.
And sometimes musing on the ways of life,
Its varied good and evil—calm and strife,
From earnest thinking will this question rise,
Whether to know is always to be wise?
Whether we might not bate a little skill
In knowing, for a larger, loftier will,

A grander purpose—a more powerful might,
Nobly to dare, and do the simple right?

But let us pause, and ask how knowledge gave,
In one who loved her well, the wish to save;
To plant, where'er his wandering steps might go,
Some seed of healing balm for human woe,
Some root of benefit for days to come,
Leaving a blessing where he found a home?

Maxwell, the student, was a youth who knew
Of books a host—of human kind but few.
Fresh from the seat of learning, crowned with fame,
A glory to his country, and his name,
He bore his honours with a manly brow,
Knowing too well how much remained to know.
Nor was it only from the classic page
He reaped what had been wealth to many a sage—
All nature was to him an open book,
From vaporous cloud, to forest leaf, or brook.
Of animal creation, wild and tame,
Each form and function he could class and name,

Tell each variety, describe each part,
All, save that little speck—the human heart.

Late has he sought this lone sequestered spot,
An honoured guest within a lowly cot,
For purpose of seclusion, more complete
Than men of his high claims can always meet.
And as he walks beneath the shadowy trees,
Heeding nor wild birds' song, nor whispering breeze,
Strange eastern characters are on the page
Which every thought and every look engage.
For gracious hints have floated to his ear
Of quick promotion to a loftier sphere,
A future destiny almost sublime,
A path of promise in that eastern clime,
Wide field of exercise for gifts so rare,
Reward for worth beyond the common share.
Apt at all learning, then, he meets this chance,
Like a brave soldier ever in advance,
Cons his deep lesson, burns the midnight oil,
And gives the summer's day to ceaseless toil.

The student walks along that verdant way,
As if nor lights nor shades around him play,
Unconscious where the tender violets lie;
Or, if he sees, with unobservant eye
Gazes before him, all absorbed and cold;
Until the pathway turns, and then—behold!
A sylvan deity in rustic dress!
Can classic student deem the vision less?
While sweet her voice rings out melodious, clear,
And these the words that strike his wond'ring ear.

JANET'S SONG.

“The butterfly on the wing,
The bird that all day long
Has nothing to do but sing
Some pleasant holiday song;
The welcome wandering bee,
O! Youth, are like to thee,
Merrily, merrily, all the day
Singing their innocent lives away.

The tree with blighted bough,
The bird with wounded breast,
The wailing winds that blow,
The billows that never rest,
The moaning, murmuring sea,
Old Age, are like to thee,
Heavily, heavily, all the day
Singing thy wearisome hours away."

There was no sentiment in Janet's song,
Though sad the theme at last; but all along
A blythe, arch look, as if she did not care
For that grave youth, who still stood list'ning there.
Nay, half as if she mocked his look so sage,
And meant for *his* that weariness of age,
She gave the words a weightier emphasis,
And, with a face all smiles, looked up to his.

Too shy to speak, or ignorant what to say,
The student met that look. Why did he stay?
Why, since he knew so much, not tear himself away?

Has he been dreaming all his life till now?
Or is this newly-wakened life a dream?
Has he been learning all his life, to know
So little how to steer along life's stream?

Why does he linger, when he should have fled?
Has he ne'er felt temptation's power before?
Better the willing feet that wisely tread,
Than all his boasted skill in ancient lore.

That evening, when the first grey shadows fell,
Came with a balmy softness to those twain.
Strange intercourse! where there was nought to tell,
And yet such earnestness to meet again.

They met like children, childish hopes to weave.
It was so pleasant on their sep'rate way
To share a purpose for each summer's eve,
And then another for the coming day.

They met; for there was none to interfere.

A widowed mother now was Janet's all;
And small her influence, by word, or tear,
That wayward child from folly to recall.

They met; the student half forgot his books,
Forgot the future in the present joy;
And gazing oft on Janet's varying looks,
He almost wished himself a peasant boy.

This was the life then—empty all beside!
The *real* life which all men must fulfil,
When good and evil ask them to decide,
And they must answer with unflinching will.

He took his *satnd*—*he* chose his portion, when,
With fond caress, he vowed to meet again.
Enough; it is a tale of common shame,
Of guilt, and tears, and woe, and mutual blame.

But not of mutual suffering. He went forth,
A man of learning and a man of worth.

So the world called him; and he questioned not,
For soon—too soon—are sins like his forgot.

He was not mean in giving. Maxwell gave
Enough in gold from present want to save.
The weeping mother took the sordid fee,
And promised all he asked her—secrecy.
She knew too well what misery was in store;
But, weak in purpose, only wept the more.

On Janet's part there had been little love,
Maxwell was not the man her heart to move.
It was a novelty, and woke her pride
To have him fond and flattering by her side.
And even now, the thought that he was gone
Brought less of pain, than to be left alone.
She did not like the cold dull blank that came
Around her like a frost; still less the blame.
For neighbours mocked, and said they always knew
He meant no good, and now their words were true.
And so, from many clouds, the dark days grew.

When winter passed, there came no pleasant spring
To Janet's cottage—no more power to sing.
No blythe laugh echoed through the weary day;
And, worse than all, there seemed no power to pray—
No wish; for with the wish there comes the power;
But dark, dull misery from hour to hour,
Anger, and tears so far from penitent
They seemed to scorch the cheeks down which they went.
It felt all injury to Janet's mind
That she should suffer thus—unjust—unkind!
While he went forth unharmed, with honoured name,
Stranger alike to suffering and to shame.

Thus hardened grew that tender heart of youth
As sin alone can harden, when the truth
Of God's great mercy never wakes a tear,
Nor hope of pardon drives away despair.
And yet not hardened all. A little cry
Awoke at length. Oh, God, what agony!
To feel the gush of woman's tenderness,
Yet want the power that little life to bless!

Mother, and child herself. Is it not sad,
In that first hour, when other hearts are glad;
When round the honoured matron's couch there come
Husband and friend—sweet influences of home,
To share the deepest joy by nature given—
The richest boon—a life to lead to heaven;
Is it not sad, to strive to still that cry,
And wish the little life might fade and die,
Feeling the weight no father comes to share
Too great a burden all alone to bear,
And still to bear, along life's weary way,
Alone, through deepest night, and longest day?

Janet recovered. Health and youth were strong,
And sometimes e'en awoke her girlish song.
Her loveliness returned with added grace,
Shedding a charm matured o'er form and face.
At least so thought the many; but the few
Saw that the rose had lost its early dew.
Something was gone. A nameless beauty, fled,
Left in its place a bolder look instead,

A louder laugh, a more unguarded air,
A smile like that of trying not to care.
Defiant words and tones escaped her too,
A scorn of all things holy, good, and true.
How could she trust, who had been injured so?
She owed the world a grudge, and she would throw
Back its proud insults, and its cry of shame.
Her will was left her yet, if lost her fame.

Oh! could that wand'rer in a distant land
Have known but half, he had been all unmanned,
For he was human. Could he have divined
The mischief done to that young heart and mind—
The fierce corrupting flood he had let in
When first he led her in the path of sin,
Just at that turning-point of life, when all
Hangs in the balance; not beyond recall
Its evil, nor its good too weak to bear
The needful discipline of culturing care—
He would have shuddered at the doom incurred
By that first step, when evil was preferred.

Yes; he was human, therefore did he tell
His restless conscience all would soon be well.
And when at length he braved that scorching clime,
New scenes, new duties, filled his utmost time.
The vast importance of his station made
All bygone pictures dwindle into shade.
He was so far away, too; why should he
Torment himself with Janet's misery?
Hers was a frequent case, and scarce need stay
Her happy nuptials on some future day.
Her name unknown—obscure her place and lot;
He would forget her—others are forgot.
Great God! And thou canst look from thy high heaven,
And see thy precious gifts, so largely given,
Perverted thus!—man's reason most sublime
Brought down to palliate the vilest crime;
And thou canst send him still thy genial rain,
Thy gen'rous harvests, and their golden grain,
With flowers, and fruits, and gently falling dew,
Soft o'er his path their freshness to renew,
And he can take thy blessings day by day,
And break thy holy law, and call it play!

But come there must a time when he will learn
A graver lesson—one he may not spurn;
That he, the stronger, when he tempts the weak
That path where virtue treads not, first to seek—
When he, the wiser, and the more refined,
Pours the first poison o'er the untaught mind,
First lets the flood of guilty horror in,
First moves the frightful avalanche of sin
To send the ruin widening on its way,
Has need to tremble, but more need to pray.

And the time came—it was not long in coming—
When he, the man of fame, fell sick and low;
His boasted intellect went idly roaming,
And pain sat tyrant on his beating brow.

Strange swarthy figures round his couch attended;
He saw them near his restless pillow move;
He knew too well it was for gold they tended;
Not one of all that servile throng for love.

Well. He was paying for the guilt of buying
What love alone is rich enough to win;
For thinking gold can still the ceaseless crying
That rises up to heaven against his sin.

Silent he lay, half dead to outward seeming.
Those weary watchers often thought him gone;
They little knew the life he lived in dreaming,
Nor what strange pictures he was gazing on.

They little knew what Truth was then revealing,
Nor how his spirit, as it prostrate lay,
Endured an immortality of feeling
In the short transit of one common day.

This was the dream that taught him more than waking,
With scarce a hope that reason would return,
Just as the silver cord of life seemed breaking;
This the stern lesson sent for him to learn.

MAXWELL'S DREAM.

I stood upon the plain of life,
And saw two mighty rivers glide;
The one rolled on with foam and strife,
Its deadly waters poisoned life,
And left a waste on either side.

The other, with its crystal wave,
Made sweetest music as it flowed;
Fresh gladness to the world it gave,
Its virtue was to heal and save,
Its mission, to the throne of God.

Advancing near with silent pace,
A glorious Angel I could see,
Who seemed my dubious steps to trace:
A pitying glance he turned on me;
And much I marvelled there should be
A tear upon his shining face.

"Can angels weep?" amazed, I cried.

He answered low—"For sin, they can.
They weep to think of One who died,
The Lord of Glory crucified,
And raised—in vain for guilty man.

"Behold yon river, broad and deep.
Oh! well may pitying angels weep;
Its depths are filled with human sin.
Far as its wid'ning waters go
Their waves are swoll'n with shame and woe,
And all the guilt that man throws in.

"Thy sin, that seemed so small to be—
Too small to claim a sorrowing tear—
An idle branch plucked from the tree—
A simple floweret crushed by thee—
Now rolls a wallowing monster there.

"Behold!" A hideous form I saw—
Yet scarce a form—a moving mass.

No vital breath it seemed to draw,
Yet tore the flowers with tooth and claw,
 And sucked the verdure from the grass,
And dashed the darkening waters high,
As if to poison earth and sky.

All things were hideous there, and foul—
 The greedy hand, the envious eye—
All that pollutes—degrades the soul;
 While shrieks of wrong and misery—
Voices that only woke to howl
 Scarce drowned the victims' withering cry.

All things were hideous there. The stain
 Of blood was on that rolling tide;
 And murd'rous hate and restless pride,
 Falsehood and avarice, side by side,
Now rose, now sank, in ceaseless strain
To conquer, and to crush—in vain.

All things were hideous there, and vile;
 Most vile my sin appeared to be.

For as I gazed, I thought the while,
Though featureless, a monstrous smile
 Claimed frightful fellowship with me.

But worse than all, I marked how fast
That dark mass gathered as it passed;
And, even in time by moments told,
Had multiplied a thousand fold.
On—on, the wid'ning river went;

 " Oh must it gathering go for ever?"
Shudd'ring I cried, "I will repent!"
 " Will that call back thy sin? No, never!

" Repent thou mayst. Believe and pray;
 So shall thy sin depart from thee,
But never human hand may stay
Its progress on that downward way;
Nor utmost stretch of human skill
Restrain its power to hurt and kill,
 Wherever human life may be.

" Such is the nature of thy sin,
 And such the anguish of its curse.

Thou mayst a happier course begin;
But having thrown that portion in,
Though heaven thy pilgrim feet may win,
Thy guilt will still make others worse."

Oh thought of horror! must it be
Thus—thus, to all eternity?
Must hell be peopled by my crime,
And earth a wilderness become;
Where friendless fallen creatures roam,
And youth is blasted ere its prime?

"E'en so," the pitying angel sighed;
"No guilt more cruel stains this earth,
No poison spreads more swift and wide,
No tears by deeper wrong are dyed,
Than those thy selfish crime wrings forth.

"But turn we to a lovelier scene,
For who can longer gaze on this?
That river, with its banks of green,
Whose crystal waters flow between,
With music ever whispering bliss.

“ There happy angels watch and wait,
Beholding with approving eyes
What man casts in of good or great;
When straight they seek the heavenly gate,
And tell the news in Paradise.”

I saw that river as it rolled
Was filled with beauty and with love.
Pure thoughts, more precious far than gold,
And kindly deeds that ne’er were told,
With kindred purpose seemed to move.

And many a silent tear was there,
And many a wish that well might live—
The father’s hope, the mother’s care,
The love that every grief would share;
While some cast in a lowly prayer,
Who had no other wealth to give.

And some, perchance the poorest giver,
Could only give self-sacrifice—

A light—a joy, shut out for ever
From earnest gaze of longing eyes.
Yet, beauteous and rejoicing river,
Thy bosom, decked with myriad dyes,
That simple gift did not despise.

The noble purpose, lofty aim,
The ceaseless toil for human weal,
Seemed but a kindred worth to claim;
For each a liquid gem became
Impressed with virtue's sacred seal.
A gem—a flower—I knew not which,
So soft their beauty, and so rich.

Soft, too, the genial airs which came
Around me like a heavenly dew.
Well might my cheek be stained with shame
To think my gifts had been so few.
To think that in temptation's hour
I had not even spared my flower.

I cried, "And will this glorious river
Bear all these precious offerings where

Bright angels live in light for ever,
And none of mine be welcomed there?
Oh! worse than all that hideous woe,
To be shut out from blessing, so!"

"Not so," the pitying angel said.
He spoke in accents soft, and mild.
"For He who bowed His sacred head,
And wept, and suffered in thy stead,
Still bids thee welcome as His child.

"Go, then, repent thee of thy sin;
Go, and a holier course begin;
Remembering what He said of yore,
When one who feared a sentence stern
Was brought His righteous will to learn,
He bade her go, and sin no more."

Maxwell awoke to life a different man.
With patient discipline he learned to scan
All human actions—most of all his own,
And e'en when best, their merit would disown.

For he had bowed his forehead in the dust,
And found no virtue save in faith and trust.
Esteemed by others, by himself despised,
Their warmest praises were but lightly prized.
Still he was happy, as all good men are,
At peace with God, though with his sins at war ;
Happy in friends, in fortune, and in health ;
Rich in the means of using well his wealth ;
Grateful, he took the bounties meant to bless ;
Nor, like the anchorite, wished his pleasures less.

But sometimes, mid the pomp of Eastern life,
Its peaceful pageants or its martial strife,
His outward eye closed on that gorgeous scene,
And, swift as thought, he saw a pathway green
Winding beneath o'er-arching trees, and heard
A voice sweet singing like a woodland bird.
Then sank his heart within him, and he fain
Had sought some wilderness or desert plain,
And there, his voice of anguish lifting high,
Cried an exceeding great and bitter cry.

But no. He was hemmed in by courtesies,
And formal steps that followed close on his,
And eyes that watched him, till his secret soul
Alone escaped their influence and control.
And in that secret soul, where none could hear,
Kind yearning thoughts would sometimes wake a tear,
And words of tenderness like these would flow
From the deep fountain of his hidden woe.

“ Oh maiden, gathering flowers! If I might now
Wipe out the guilt-stain from thy tender brow,
Take thy young hand, all innocent in mine,
And tell thee only of a love divine;
Lead thee, poor lamb, to pastures green and pure,
Where the Good Shepherd makes his flock secure;
There leave thee, with His crook of love to guide
Thy wandering steps, and keep thee near His side!
Oh maiden, gathering flowers! I call thee back
In the night watches to that peaceful track
From whence I took thee. Art thou wandering still
In thorny ways that only lead to ill?
I dare not think where thy poor feet may stray;
My only refuge is to hope and pray.”





JANET'S LOVE.



NCE in a lifetime wakes the power of loving
With all love's deep intensity of bliss.
Janet, though lost, retained the grace of
moving

In sweet accord with harmonies like this.

Can they be wholly lost, who still can love?
Or is it only Nature's voice appealing
To that strong instinct lent us from above
To prove the immortality of feeling?

Her day was dawning—beauty to her home,
And gladness to her path that looked so dreary;
A call awakening that would bid her come
With bounding footstep, late so slow and weary.

Yes; there was something like a golden treasure
In store for her—the lost one, and the poor.
It came with lightest touch of idle pleasure—
A simple greeting at her cottage door.

It came with martial pomp, and music playing,
And banners floating in the summer light;
A gallant band their waving plumes displaying,
With flash of glittering arms all bold and bright.

Janet amongst the gazers stood that day.
Her young heart danced to hear the music play.
But while her eye glanced quick from sword to plume,
A look fell on her face—it was her doom!
She saw it not; but kissed her laughing boy,
And lived again her hour of girlish joy.
That evening, when she rocked her babe to sleep,
Mother and child seemed holiday to keep;
So gladsome was their frolic, and so wild,
You would have thought some bliss already smiled
Upon that lowly cottage. Was it so?
Or but the lightning from the cloud of woe?

He would not sleep—that merry, laughing thing,
So Janet, all in play, began to sing.
She knew no discipline—not she, poor mother,
Babes were they both, sporting with one another.

JANET'S SONG.

My love shall be a soldier gay,
And I will be his bride;
And mid the stormy battle-fray
Stand fighting by his side.

The beating drum, and merry fife,
Shall wake our bridal morn;
And I will be the happiest wife
That ever yet was born.

My love shall have a gallant sword,
That every foe may fear;
But on his lip a gentle word
To whisper in my ear.

I know he will be bravest, where
The brave ones never yield;
And I shall be beside him there,
His comrade in the field.

Then over land, and over sea,
I care not where we roam;
His manly arm will shelter me,
His love will be my home.

What means the idle creature, that her song
Rings out again with joy? It is so long
Since laughter woke that house. The mother sighs,
And wipes the tear mist from her glistening eyes.
And yet she smiles, for sweet it is to hear
That voice of girlhood musical and clear.
Where are they gone?—poor soul, she wonders where,
Those early days that seem to have had no care,
On looking back, so great the after grief;
Yes, Janet's song is sweet; but can it bring relief?

That evening when the day's long toil was o'er,
A soldier sought the widow's lowly door,

Asking for welcome. Could he find it there?
There was no room, he said, in all the place to spare.

Never was smile on hospitable face
More sweet than Janet's—never native grace
More pure than hers, when, turning to her guest,
She bade him welcome to their humble best.
Unconscious she had seen that face before,
While mid the gazers round her cottage door
She failed to recognize the manly brow;
But did not fail to mark its beauty now.

Blake was a soldier, and a glorious thing
It seems to fight for country and for king—
Most glorious it would seem, for human fame
Heaps proudest honours on the warrior's name;
And of all victories gained beneath the sun,
Most blazons those which valour's sword has won.
Valour—that lives and moves with shout and song,
The trumpet herald, and the gazing throng;
Which claims in death the vast funereal show,
The tomb—the statue—and the pomp of woe.
Valour like this—esteemed—admired by all,
Needs, we are told, the war-cry for its call—

The cry of human suffering, and of blood,
The rage of battle—and the crimsoned flood—
The fiery stimulus of hate, and strife—
The homes made desolate, the waste of life—
Such is the valour men esteem most great—
Most useful to a people, or a state.

And yet I think a valour still more brave
May sometimes warm the heart that beats to save;
To spread the shield of manhood o'er the weak,
And spare the blushes on a youthful cheek;
Make woman's tender fame its holiest care,
And keep the purest pure—the fairest fair.
Yes, it is valour—useful valour too,
To keep our English maidens good and true,
Their homes unspotted, and their after lives
As mothers blest—immaculate as wives;
The very poorest, noble in a name
Which never knew the taint of evil fame.

It must be valour, when the foe within
Is mighty, and the battle strong with sin,
To fight, and fight alone, in such a cause—

No shout of fame—no murmur of applause
Even for the victory. Yet how glorious then,
With self subdued, to rule that conquered plain—
That kingdom vast won for a mightier king;
Its fruits and flowers uninjured, to His feet to bring!

Blake, though a soldier, had a gentle guile
In winning hearts by cordial look, and smile,
And kindly ways, and flattering words, not few,
Well timed and toned, if not entirely true.
His manly form too, and his limbs so lythe;
His front so fearless, and his laugh so blithe,
All won him welcome—won him friends—and more—
As Janet found, to her heart's grievous sore.

But joy came first; for scarce a week had passed,
Ere he returned, and then the die was cast.
He spoke of love with many a tender vow;
And Janet listened, glad, though tearful now;
For love has tears, even in its sweet excess;
And now, at length it seemed that heaven designed to bless.

Not for one moment passed o'er Janet's mind
A shade of doubt that he was good as kind,

And meant to bind her for the rest of life,
In love's true bond, his honourable wife.
Thus—with no shadow o'er that future bliss—
Thus did she listen—thus received his kiss.

And then—Oh! then, the golden hours began;
For oft he came, and swift the moments ran;
And when he failed to come, she, not the less,
Filled up the time with her great happiness;
Arrayed herself in robes of virtuous pride,
An honoured wife—perchance, an envied bride;
Painted sweet pictures of the days to come;
Of all that love can yield, in peace and home;
Friends gathering round—glad welcomes—songs of mirth—
Her aged mother by the winter's hearth—
Bright rosy children laughing at her side—
Herself the centre of their joy and pride—
And he—Oh! could that picture e'er grow dim
Which owed its life—its loveliness to him?

No, no, she never doubted—would have spurned
All thoughts which could that pleasant tide have turned.

And none there were—not even a cloud sailed by
To dim the beauty of her sun-lit sky.
Then looked the world all freshly green and fair,
Songs in the forest, perfumes in the air;
Morn, noon, and night, a different aspect wore;
Flowers blooming as they ne'er had bloomed before;
While youth flew back again on buoyant wing,
And scattered promise of a second spring.

Janet had suffered; therefore had she learned
A few sad lessons, not entirely spurned.
And sometimes woke, with silent, secret pain,
The wish to live her foolish life again
Without its folly, and without its tears,
And thus without its stain for after years.
Now seemed the time—the bright glad opening now—
If not to live her life again, to vow
No more to tread the thorny ways of sin,
But with this vow a happier course begin.

Yes; she would be so good—so meek—so mild—
Her mother scarce would know her altered child.

And haply, that great God, of whom she heard
Might not entirely spurn her if she erred
A little in her weakness now and then.
The way looked difficult; but it was plain
He did not mean to cast her quite away,
Or why this dawning of a better day?—
This load of happiness for one like her,
Which seemed at times almost too much to bear?

If the good angels guard us in our homes
To whisper warning when temptation comes,
Spread their kind wings benignant o'er the weak,
With heavenly odour fans the beauteous cheek,
Move the light air with stir of tenderest love,
And woo the fluttering soul to soar above;
How on their holy mission must they grieve
To watch the snares that human wrong can weave;
The treacherous purpose clothed in seeming truth,
The pitfall spread for heedless trusting youth.
Do they not tell us in the hush of night
Of those great rivers rolling in their might,
Where one receives into its boiling flood
The evil of man's actions—one the good?

Do they not bid us pause upon the brink
A little moment, ere we act, to think;
And if we say, we are too weak or blind
To do *great* deeds, then bid us do the *kind*?
Do they not tell us how a pitying thought—
A tear shed for another, may be caught
Almost before it falls, and thus be made,
With every power put forth to save or aid,
By the sweet waters of that blessed river,
“A thing of beauty,” and “a joy for ever”?

THE MIDNIGHT VOICE.

Through the moonlit woodland wending
Blake one night went musing on;
Scarce to outward things attending,
When he heard this warning tone:

“Faithless feet, that nightly wander,
Turn again—Oh! turn again!
Virtuous love will last thee longer
Than the love that ends in pain.

“ Art thou brave?—a British warrior?
Prouder title none may find—
Bolder step for trench, or barrier;
But the truly brave are kind.

“ Art thou free?—a glorious creature?
Free to think—to feel—to move?
Nobly stamped in form and feature?
Then thy royal lineage prove.

“ Prove it where the weak lie wailing,
Trampled by the heedless throng;
By thy valour never failing,
By thy rescue bold and strong.

“ Art thou generous?—frank in giving?
Let thy selfish pleasures go.
Live henceforth a life worth living;
Not for helpless woman’s woe.

“ Art thou kind? Oh! hear them calling
Loud for help through all the land.

Youth and beauty round thee falling,
Help them with thy generous hand.

“Hast thou wiped a brow in dying?
Whispered tender thoughts and good?
Hast thou nursed a comrade, lying
Wounded on the field of blood?

“Can thine eye, with gentlest feeling,
Watch a brother's parting breath;
And ne'er know a tear-drop stealing
For a fallen sister's death?

“Turn again: the way is dreary
Where thy faithless steps would tend,
Woman's love can cheer the weary;
Be her noblest, firmest friend!”

Blake heard the voice. Who does not hear sometimes
The voice of conscience, clear as midnight chimes?
Then is our time to pause—to think, before
We dare to venture even one step more.

Then is our time to look around—to choose
The better pathway, ere that choice we lose.
And, oh! that better path, well chosen then,
May lead us where we never doubt again.

'Twas but a moment's pause, and Blake went on;
The voice was silent—his one chance was gone.
He did not wish to hear what conscience said;
That better path he did not wish to tread;
And least of all his wishes pointed where
The wrong inflicted, he might yet repair.
He never meant—he could not mean to tie
That fallen creature to his destiny.
Her lot was self-imposed, and claimed from him
No special act of duty to redeem.
Besides, where was his home?—on land, or wave?
A soldier's home can only be his grave.
No, no; there were a thousand reasons strong
Pointing the way where he had walked so long.
And thus he chose, because he loved it best,
The guilty way of injury and unrest.
But now the time was coming, when his heart
Must steel itself for conflict—they must part!

The troops, late quartered in a neighbouring town,
Learned that immediate orders had come down
To sail for foreign service. Prompt, and glad,
They sprang to action—Blake alone was sad;
Not sad to go, but sad and sorely teased
With that entanglement which once had pleased.
Not sad to think of wounds beyond his cure;
But of that parting scene he must endure.

Blake was no coward—feared no foe—not he!
But, oh! to hear that cry of agony!
To look into that woman's trusting face,
And speak her doom—bereavement, and disgrace!
'Twas this unmanned him; and yet time flew fast;
The hour of meeting came—it was their last!

Janet had donned her Sunday garb that night,
Had swept her hearth, and made her fire burn bright;
For Autumn trees were shivering pale, and thin;
And sweet such time for making cheer within.
Her boy she kept from sleep awhile, to see
That noble father, who was soon to be.

For Blake was ever playful with the child,
And loved to wake his laughter loud, and wild.
So the two waited listening—head askance—
And then sometimes a few steps in advance.
Both rosy, glad, and, oh! so full of hope,
As if that coming joy filled their world's utmost scope.

The aged mother had been all the day
Nursing a neighbour, and was still away;
So Janet thought herself both rich and great
In that one evening—'twas her hour of state.
Proud as a queen, she smoothed her hair, and smiled;
Fond as a woman, kissed and pressed her child;
Light as a child herself, sprang to her feet,—
When came the guest, his fond embrace to meet.

Eyes that are full of joy, oft see not well
When other eyes a tale of sadness tell.
Dazzled, perchance, by their own inward light,
Which makes all objects looked upon more bright.
So Janet knew not—dreamed not there could be
A shadow, where no shadow she could see.

Her lover might be silent, but not sad.
Oh, no! he must be happy, pleased, and glad;
For she had spread the board with choicest food;
Had heaped the hearth with brightest burning wood;
Had marked, and mended, as he told her how;
And now, beside him in that mellow glow
Of household light, she spreads her little store
Of love's sweet gifts, his heedless eyes before;
And when he smiled not—for he could not smile,
She came caressing—stroked his hair the while,
And kissed his brow, as closely to his side
She pressed with all her mingled love and pride.

He could not bear it—bade her take the child
Away to rest. When she returned, he smiled;
But such a smile! His cheek was pale as death;
And came at intervals his deep-drawn breath;
Like that of one who has some deed to do
Demanding strength of arm, and purpose too.

“Janet,” he said, “you must not kiss me now.”

She answered with her lips pressed on his brow.

"You must not love me."

"Then I must not live."

"You cannot be my wife."

"Then God forgive

My sin, if sin it be, to love thee so;
For where thou goest, for ever will I go!"

"Janet, believe me, and be wise at last;
The time for this sweet tenderness is passed."

"I am not, and I never shall be wise."

Truly she said. For gazing in his eyes,
She knew not, cared not, what there was above—
Beneath—around her—only for his love.

"Janet, I speak the truth. This is no play,
My duty calls me, and I must obey;
We sail to-morrow."

Even as she gazed
A glimmer of the truth shot forth. Amazed,

And wild, she yet believed his eyes
More than his words, for lips can utter lies;
And something struck her there, as stern, or changed—
Oh! that long look, when love is first estranged!

Staggering, she fell off from him like a bough
Cleft by the woodman's axe; and shivering, low,
Lay at his feet, unconscious as the dead—
Happy, could her young spirit then have fled.

But wake she must; and with her opening sight,
The truth came full upon her, in the night
Of one great misery comprehending all.
What could she do, but wring her hands, and call
For mercy; while in accents low,
She pleaded thus, that she might also go:

“Thou wilt not leave me—no; thou canst not sever
My life's cord so.
Where thou art going, for ever, and for ever,
There will I go!

"I will be with thee, where the hailstorms rattle—
In fire—in snow—
In desert wastes—or 'mid the roar of battle—
Even there I'll go.

"What! not believe me? say I am but woman—
Poor child of woe?
Oh! then have pity on a love so human,
And let me go.

"I will not cost thee trouble, shame, nor danger—
Not shame—oh, no!
I'll stand beside thee like a common stranger;
Then let me go.

"I will not weep; my tears have been too many
Again to flow.
My blighted name will not be known to any;
Oh, let me go!

"They shall not find me, when the ranks are moving,
I'll creep so low.
What tongue can tell the power there is in loving?
Oh, let me go!

"I will be quiet when the guns are firing.
You do not know
How brave I am—how patient—how untiring!
So let me go.

"Death? I will meet it with my arms about you—
So—ever so—
Nay, I am mad—I cannot live without you!
Do let me go!"

Wailing, she sank upon the ground before him.
What could he say?
Fearing her woman's weakness might steal o'er him,
He turned away.

Even as she lay, he did not stoop to gather
Once more into his arms that senseless form;
He could not meet those pleading eyes; but rather
Went forth into the night-wind and the storm.

Away, away—he did not stay, nor listened,
If yet a wailing voice came on the wind.
Quick falling rain-drops on his eyeballs glistened,
T^h not tears—he left his grief behind.

Away, away—the stir of life before him—

He rushed to meet its conflicts, or its joys;

Happy, with martial banners waving o'er him,

And conscience drowned in tumult and in noise.

Happy, at least, his merry comrades thought him;

They saw no sadness on his manly brow.

With eager haste they told how they had sought him;

For all was earnest work and duty now.

Ere morning dawned, the fitful storm abated,

And favouring breezes wandered from the shore.

They sailed—a gallant band, with hope elated;

Yet some—how many?—to return no more.

Ere morning dawned, a lonely woman toiled

Along the public pathway, travel-soiled,

And sorely beaten by the wind and rain;

Yet, on she went, unheeding hill or plain,

Or way-side shelter, or inviting smile

That sometimes bade her pause and rest awhile.

On, on she went without a word of speech,
Save question when the harbour she might reach,
Or where the shipping lay, or even where
The sea itself; for that seemed all her care—
The vast, wide sea, that on its restless wave
Was soon to bear that soldier-band so brave.

If one strong purpose, filling all the mind
And soul, makes madness, she was madly blind—
Blind to all forms and images but one;
Deaf to all voices save the well-known tone
That she *must* hear again—yes; come what will,
Must find her lover, and be near him still.

Thus Janet went, when late the morning broke,
And autumn birds with tiny warblings woke,
While tardy peasants loitered on their way,
And nature all looked dreary, dull, and grey.
On, on, until her fixed and eager eye,
Still gazing southward, could at length descry
A long blue line—"the sea!" She bounded on;
In one short hour might not the goal be won?

Ah! but that distance! Measuring by her hope
She little knew how vast its actual scope;
Nor would have guessed, but for that public way,
How soon the morning glided into day.
Hour after hour sped on, and all too fast;
She ceased to ask the travellers as they passed
What time, for time was now her cruel foe,
And swifter yet her way-worn feet must go.

At last the outskirts of the town were gained—
Her question asked—her purpose half explained,
Not to the idle throng, but where apart
An aged seaman coned his time-worn chart;
With quivering lip, and anguish in her tone,
To him she spoke. He simply answered, "Gone;
Sailed with the early tide." Too late!—too true!
Stretching her gaze out, o'er the dismal blue,
She saw a long dim line of dark despair,
Without one sail—one speck of promise there.
Too late!—too true! She wandered toward the coast,
The sport of idle winds—a creature lost;
Heedless, if tempests beat upon her brow,
Alike to her was storm or sunshine now;

Alike the rising or the setting sun ;
Her toil was ended, and her labour done.

Amazed at the sight of her sorrow,
She stood by the moaning sea ;
And to-day must be like to-morrow ;
And the whole of her life must be
With this great misery laden ;
For, alas ! poor desolate maiden,
He'll never come back to thee !

He'll never come back to thee !
Said the winds in their pitiful wailing ;
Said the clouds in their wintry sailing ;
And the low voice of the sea :
He'll never come back to thee !

Oh, then, how she longed to be sinking
Down in that fathomless deep ;
For the heaviest grief was in thinking,
And she had no tears to weep !

But the waves looked dark and dreary,
And, oh! she was so weary!

And only wanted to sleep,
Like a babe in its mother's breast,
To rest, and do nothing but rest.

Rest? Poor desolate maiden,
There is no rest for thee;
Thy heart, with its misery laden,
May cry to the moaning sea;
And its wildest wave will be,
Though it looks so cold and blue,
A friend more kind and true
Than man has been to thee.

Oh! cold and restless billow,
Oh! darkening close of day,
Is there never a peaceful pillow
For a child that has lost her way
For the weary, wounded feet,
Is there never a home on earth,
Nor a place by the household hearth;
Nor a welcome kind and sweet?

For a poor benighted maiden,
With shame and misery laden?

A home there was, and all too quickly found—
Welcome—and seeming balm to heal her wound.
Friends?—they were kind at least, and thought no harm
But promised food to eat, and fire to warm;
And bade her drink with them of Lethe's cup.
Alas! poor wretches! they had drunk it up
Even to the very dregs, and still lived on,
All faith—all hope—all trace of virtue gone.

So Janet, stunned with grief, and heeding not
What doom might darken o'er her future lot,
Caught at the hand of welcome, following where
Some little comfort she might hope to share;
Not frenzied now, for passion's fever gone,
Had left her senseless, like a thing of stone;
Passive, and mute, save when her beating brain
Awoke at times a sudden cry of pain.
Then came the anodyne—the soothing draught,
With burning lip too eagerly she quaffed,

And in forgetfulness of present woe
She ceased to heed where yet her steps might go.

Who watched that night upon the lone sea-shore,
And saw that lost child there?
Who kindly listened 'mid the wild waves' roar?
Who watches still, and listens evermore
Even for the echo of a prayer?

Oh, stubborn knees, that would not bend that night!
Oh, grief, that would not wait!
Blind, weeping eyes, that would not see the light!
Poor frenzied brain, all wrecked by passion's might,
Calling it fate!
One suppliant cry had reached to heaven's high gate—
One upward look—not even then too late.

But such the madness of our human grief,
The haste of our despair,
Spurning all solace but the one relief
That comes not for our prayer,
We rush impetuous on the doom we make,
And thus, the hearts that might have healed, we break.

Even on that night of sharpest agony,
 Though human voice might not be there to speak,
Had she but waited for the winds to dry
 The tears upon her cheek—
Waited a little till the storm swept by,
 And clouds began to break,
Who knows what hand with healing from on high
 Had stanch'd her wounds for gentle pity's sake?

Had she but waited, who can tell what feet,
 Bound on their embassy of love,
Might have been tracing hers by lane and street,
Close on her wayward steps, and closer yet,
 With messages of pardon from above?

Had she but waited, even her childish fear
 Of life's dark raging flood
Might have been soothed, and stayed the falling tear,
 By angel ministers, who understood
How deep her wrongs, how difficult to bear;
For though the evil may be often near,
 So is the good.

And He who watches through the deepest night
O'er human woe and sin,
Sees those two rivers rolling in their might,
And all that man throws in—
He, pitying still, when other love has failed,
Touches brave hearts and true, that never quailed
With earthly fear, and bids them go and seek
The poorest outcast, words of life to speak.

He who spared not His Son, does He not send,
Wherever human guilt and tears abound,
Some heavenly message borne by human friend,
Some hand of mercy human aid to lend,
Strengthened by love profound?
That even those most desolate and lone
May be—when the Good Shepherd calls His own—
Not lost, but found.



JANET'S RUIN.

WHEN musing in our daily walk
A broken flower we find,
We gently raise the fragile stalk,
And call the storm unkind.

When falls the bird that used to wake
Our slumbers with its lay,
We ask, what cruel hand could take
That happy life away?

When o'er the ocean's restless wave
A noble wreck is tossed,
How many risk their lives to save
The suffering or the lost!

When flames are raging fierce and high,
What thousands aid will lend,
Bold hearts obey that piteous cry—
The poorest find a friend.

What generous hands will bring relief,
Wherever harm is done;
What lovely eyes will weep for grief—
For every grief but one!

And must that one go gathering on,
To swell the tide of woe?
Its few brave champions stand alone,
Where the dark waters flow?

Forbid it all we hold most dear,
While strength to save is given;
Forbid it all we reverence here,
And all we hope in heaven!

But turn we to our task again,
And let our sorrowing eyes
Behold what traces still remain
Of early paradise.

And turn we to a different form,
Though one of beauty rare;
Her blush perchance a tinge less warm,
Her cheek a shade less fair.

The Lady Ellen dwells at ease
With plenty on her board;
Small care is hers, but how to please
And recompense her lord.

For he has given her gems, and gold,
And he has given her love;
A treasure, if it ne'er grows cold,
All sordid wealth above.

The Lady Ellen's queenly brow,
Calm in its virtuous pride,
Looks smiling on, while blessings flow
Uncounted by her side.

She has no thought—she has no fear,
That darker days may come;
Her husband's love is all to her—
That—and her honoured home.

And now they watch the setting sun
Fade from their terrace green.
Oh, what—with two such hearts in one—
Can ever come between?

For perfect love can weave a wreath
Of flowers that never fade;
While o'er the charms that glow beneath,
There scarce can fall a shade.

And here true love a garden makes—
A paradise of bloom—
And all around sweet music wakes
In melodies of home.

Why should the Lady Ellen fear,
'Mid flowers so bright and gay?
'Tis summer here through all the year,
And morning all the day.

'Mid the summer's brightest bloom;
'Mid the odorous flowers' perfume;
Underneath the sheltering trees,
Scarcely stirred by wandering breeze,

Where the golden sunbeams play
Lightly with the quivering spray;
By the lady's bower of green,
Where she sits a thronèd queen;
Throned on love's imperial faith,
Crowned with love's unfading wreath,
Love's own music o'er her head,
Round her feet love's carpet spread,
Love's blue symbol in the skies;—
Even amid this paradise
Falls a shadow, dimly stealing,
Scarce at first a form revealing;
Just the shadow of a shade,
By that brightness, darker made.

“No!” the Lady Ellen cries—
Draws the veil before her eyes,
Turns her gaze a different way,
Will not see that shadow grey;
Calls it but an idle dream,
Just as blessed truths will seem
Dismal fictions in the night.
So she clears her waking sight,

So she seats her at the board,
Smiling on her gracious lord.
Is he gracious, as of yore?
Mocks that shadow at the door.

"No!" the Lady Ellen cries,
Draws the veil before her eyes,
Thinks her lord is crossed with care,
Strives his weary mood to spare,
Sits apart, and does not speak,
Only gazes on his cheek,
On his brow, and on his hair—
Might her fingers wander there?
Something checks her: half afraid,
Down she shrinks into the shade
By that darkening shadow made.

Still the Lady Ellen cries
"No!" and still she veils her eyes—
Stops her senses—will not hear
Aught to make her doubt or fear.
No; the sun may cease to shine,
Flowers and leaves to wreath and twine,

All things lovely, bright, and gay,
From her garden fade away,
But the love that lights her home,
Change to that can never come!

Idle tongues may whispering tell
Tales that make her bosom swell;
They may say she sits alone—
Sits and weeps, her comfort gone.

But the Lady Ellen bears
High that queenly head of hers;
And no eye will ever see
What her inmost thoughts may be.
Forth she walks at noon of day,
Smiling—gracious—almost gay;
Says her lord has urgent need
For his absence—or his speed—
Anything—but that he goes—
Where?—no living creature knows,
Save that shadow, which has come
Scattering darkness o'er his home.

Such the Lady Ellen's mien
While she thinks her looks are seen,
Watched perchance by eyes that make
Idle sport of hearts that break.
Ah! those eyes should watch her come
Back into her silent home,
Cast herself, where no one sees,
Down upon her trembling knees,
Abject—lost—for what can life
Be to her—an unloved wife?

In the Lady Ellen's home
Seldom dare the curious come;
Save one neighbour, fired with zeal,
Prompt to show how she can feel—
Feel, and understand, and weep
Over wrongs so sad and deep.
Thus she pities, thus bewails,
Thus she tells her mournful tales,
Burdened all with griefs that flow
From the source of Ellen's woe.
And the lady sits, and hears,
Rendering neither smiles, nor tears,

Nor the slightest sign, that e'er
Fact or comment touches her.

Only once, when autumn chill
Wept in silence soft and still,
Through the misty twilight, made
Darker by that shadow's shade;
And the neighbour told of one,
So unloved, and worse than lone,
That she pined away and died.
Then that lady's queenly pride
Well-nigh yielded to the power
Of the story and the hour.
But she gathered strength again,
Held her heart, and crushed its pain;
While the kindly closing day
Wrapped her in its curtain grey;
And the anguish of the blow
Passed, and left her pale as snow—
Pale, and still, without a trace
Of that anguish on her face.

THE NEIGHBOUR'S STORY.

I KNEW a home all sunny bright,
With fruits, and flowers so gay ;
The nightingale sang there all night,
The cuckoo all the day.
And one was mistress of that home
Whose heart was ill at rest ;
And pleasant friends did smiling come
And called her more than blest.
They little knew what thoughts arose
To dim her eye with grief ;
Where scarce there seemed a withering rose,
And scarce a fading leaf.

They watched the early sunbeams kiss
The dew from leaf and spray,
While happy warblers sung the bliss
Of each returning day ;
They watched the glow of life—the stir
Of many a jocund wing,
That fluttered through the buoyant air
Its honeyed wealth to bring ;

They thought, amid that garden green,
And 'mid those blooming bowers,
She might have walked a summer queen,
And wreathed her brow with flowers.

And so she wished, and so she strove,
Amid that garden sweet;
'Twas not her fault, that faded love
Lay withering at her feet.
For months, and years, she struggled on,
To wear a cloudless brow;
To smile—to speak with cheerful tone—
And hush the grief below.
And there was one who might have known
How much that brow was changed,
Had not his eye unheeding grown,
Or turned away, estranged.

But Heaven was kinder far than man.
A messenger was sent—
A chill—a hectic flush began—
Her heart knew what it meant.

At early morn a pallid hue,
A change from cold to hot,
That crimson flush, how fast it grew!
But he perceived it not.
He never marked her drooping eye,
Nor felt her feverish kiss.
'Tis love that reads its destiny
In burning words like this.

They wondered how she lay so calm
Upon her dying bed.
Oh! was there not a precious balm
Around her pillow shed?
Beyond the thought that rest was near,
That death was but the way—
The open door through pain and fear
To Heaven's eternal day—
Beyond the thought of One who died
To cheer her parting breath?
Alas! poor soul, the human tide
Of feeling flowed in death!

They told her of the joys to come;
She raised her drooping eyes.
They pointed to her heavenly home;
She turned them toward the skies.
She had no doubt—no anxious fear—
A child of faith and prayer,
Yet something touched her still more near,
Than all the glories there.
It was to think of him—how blest
His future lot might be:
The grassy grave her silent rest;
And he for ever free!

The Lady Ellen sits alone,
She knows not where her lord is gone;
She will not ask, for changed is now
The very aspect of his brow,
That used to look so kind and true,
So bold, and yet so tender too.
Alone she waits his late return,
Oft trims her fire, and makes it burn
With fitful blaze, again to die;
Too like her own sad destiny.

Alone, she waits through half the night;
Alone, while stars are shining bright;
While all the world around her sleeps;
And no one sees her, if she weeps.
Alone, when skies are overcast,
She heeds not storm, nor raging blast;
Save as they sometimes wake a fear,
Lest when he comes she may not hear.

Ah! where is now that lady's pride,
Since flowed her life with backward tide?
And where is now the haughty brow,
And where the look exulting now,
That told of treasure prized too much;
Of bliss no human power might touch;
Of certain joys for years to come,
All safely garnered in her home?

Behold her then, with drooping head,
Her careless tresses loosely spread,
Her hand beneath her marble cheek,
Her lips, that scarce have power to speak,
Just breathing forth this murmuring strain,
So often sung, and sung in vain.

ELLEN'S SONG.

They tell of cold and hunger,
And the cry for food and fire;
But I know a want that is stronger,
A more intense desire.
'Tis not for the morning breaking,
Nor the song of summer birds;
But, oh! when the heart is aching
For a few kind words!

'Tis not when the wintry shadows
Lie dark upon the ground;
For the joy of purple meadows,
Nor the streamlet's summer sound.
'Tis not for the spring returning,
Nor the song of early birds;
But, oh! when the heart is yearning
For a few kind words.

Hark! Is there not a footstep near?
And is there not a listening ear,
To which those faint words sadly come,
With memories of a blighted home,
And all that was, and might have been,
Of perfect love and peace within?

And has the faithless wanderer found
A home on that unhallowed ground,
Where lawless love, if such it be,
Has wrecked his heart's fidelity?
A home? Oh! not for scenes of shame
Was meant that pure, that sacred name.
Where holy joy can never come,
Nor mutual trust, there is no home.

But now his ear has caught that strain;
And, quivering through his heart, the pain
Of self-reproach arrests his hand,
And bids him silent, trembling, stand,
Before, the wonted signal made,
He enters where his home is laid

A sightless ruin, and his hearth
The dreariest spot of all the earth;
Where two once loving hearts now meet
With no glad look, nor greeting sweet;
But coldly, like unwelcomed guest,
Each seeks the pillow of unrest.

Say, was it worth the tears that flow
Unseen for thee—this endless woe,
To seek a shadow, and to make
Thy home a ruin, for its sake?

Nay, answer not that she was fair,
And young—the victim of despair;
With pleading look, and tearful eye,
Half guiltless of her destiny;
A creature sorely wronged, and left,
Of every earthly friend bereft.
Say not that pity first arose,
And bade thee soothe, and heal her woes;
Then, looking on a world unkind,
The way to heal thou could'st not find.

If such thy plea, Heaven only knows
Thy share of blame. I speak of those
Who weep, and of that tide that flows
With widening swell of human tears,
And human guilt, through endless years.

But different feelings now awake,
That bond unblest, he longs to break;
The little barque he thought to stay
Awhile upon its dangerous way,
Then steered into the raging main,
He longs to send adrift again,
Loosed from his hold, whate'er its fate.
He longs to turn from joys that sate,
And vex, and weary, to his home,
And there to rest for days to come.

'Twas Janet,—guilty Janet's shade
That round his hearth the darkness made.
A casual meeting,—kind intent,
And gentle words, at first well-meant,
Had wrought the harm no skill may cure,
No home, uninjured, may endure.

And Janet, once again cast off,
Becomes the sport of tongues that scoff,
And hastes, affrighted, on her way;
For how are feet like hers to stay,
Without one hand stretched forth to save,
Before they reach the cheerless grave?

The Lady Ellen sits no more
So sad and lonely as before.
Her lord has sought his home again,
And tells her all, and thinks the pain
Of telling will not plead in vain
With her who, when their hearts were one,
Could never hear his altered tone,
Nor see the drooping of his eye,
Without a tear of sympathy.

And now she pities, soothes, and cheers,
And points the way to happier years,
And prays that God will give him grace
A wiser, holier path to trace;
And while she whispers words like these,
And smiles again—*he* calls it peace.

And peace it is—in one sense peace,
As earthly hopes and feelings cease,
And firmer grows the bond between
Her spirit and the world unseen.
But if to live again the life
She lived as woman, friend, and wife;
To see her garden bloom once more
As brightly as it bloomed of yore;
To hear the birds around her sing
As sweetly as in love's young spring;
To feel that freshness of the heart
Which mingled hopes and joys impart,
Before a single doubt has come,
Or shadow dimmed the light of home—
If peace like this she seeks again,
Ah! who shall join the broken chain?
Or bid those golden links entwine,
That yield but to a hand Divine.

So walks the shadow on its darkening way—
A thing of night, unfit to meet the day;

Still scattering broadcast on its downward course
The poison seeds of anguish and remorse.
And she, once kind of heart, who used to give
Room to the very worm that it might live,
Who nursed the timid bird with wounded wing,
And fed and sheltered many a helpless thing,
Now, changed her early nature, as all sin,
But chiefly this, must change the life within,
Spreads her vile snares youth's heedless feet beneath,
And weaves her chains, more cruel far than death.
For such her guilt, its deepest, bitterest curse
Is ever this : it still makes others worse.

And now a widowed mother waits her boy,
Her oldest born—her lone heart's holiest joy ;
Who stood beside her when his father died,
And in that day of sorrow felt the pride
And power of manhood thrill his noble heart
With high resolve to act a generous part ;
Through every ill, his constant aid to lend,
And live his mother's stay—protector—friend.

Where is that youth of noble promise gone?
Nay, ask not where—a shadow lured him on.
And so the darkening river swells and grows,
And wider still the tide of misery flows.
For though death snatches soon, with eager hand,
His early victims from that guilty band,
The guilt lives on—the cry goes up to Heaven,—
“Oh! must they perish thus—unheard and unforgiven?”

And where is she? for time is hurrying fast,
And swiftly ever is that sad life passed.
Where is the girl who gaily sang of yore,
And plaited garlands by her cottage door,
Heedless and merry as the birds of Spring?
Can that be Janet?—that poor faded thing!
Her face so lovely once, half hid beneath
Wild waves of hair—the remnant of that wreath
Which lay in shining folds around her brow
Rich in its beauty—poor and scattered now.
Can that be Janet, once the favourite where
Youth mocked at grief, and pleasure laughed at care;
Who asks, and now sometimes must ask in vain,
For some kind cordial just to still her pain?

The girl is dying. Many die like her—
Uncared for, in their misery and despair,
A fevered flush burns in her hollow cheek,
Her flashing eyes a tale of frenzy speak;
While fitful laughter, sadder far than tears,
Rings out the knell of worse than wasted years.

The girl is dying; but she must be made
To look her best, ere falls the night of shade.
The painted victim, for a few more hours,
Must smile. The sacrifice, adorned with flowers,
Go forth again upon her downward way—
A curse by night, a shadow through the day.

The girl is dying; but that voice so sweet
They cannot spare, where light companions meet.
So, bent on pleasure for the passing hour,
A deeper draught into her cup they pour,
And half with flattering words, and half in scorn,
They cheer her on—poor jaded thing—till worn
With faint resistance she at length complies,
And sings a low, sad song, while tears are in her eyes.

JANET'S SONG.

Happy man, to die and leave me!

Father, father!

Glad I am I did not grieve thee,

Death I would have welcomed rather.

Glad I am thou canst not hear me—

Lover, lover!

Only once thou shouldst come near me,

When the pale, dead face they cover.

But to thee my heart is crying—

Mother, mother!

Just to lay my head in dying,

On thy bosom, and no other.

“That is no song,” the gay companions cry;

“Who wants to hear of dying, or to die?”

Yet something strikes them strange in Janet's strain,

And, half afraid, they turn and look again.

For who, since first she came, has ever heard
Of home or friends, from her sad lips a word?
Outcast she might have been, with heart of stone;
A parent's sheltering roof might ne'er have known;
Still less have ever hushed a babe to rest,
Or stilled its cry upon that weary breast.
Nay, some have said she loathes the very touch
Of infant hands; and once was seen to clutch,
As if in hate, a little hand away,
That round her neck in gentle sport would play.
But greater still the wonder of that throng,
That thoughts of love should blend with Janet's song.
For never yet, in moments sad or gay,
Has love been known the burden of her lay.

What ails the girl? She seems bewildered, crazed—
See how she sits and stares, with eye-balls glazed!
As if she saw some distant world, unseen
By those around, where once her life had been.
And still her eyes are glistening—strange, and bright—
And still she laughs—oh, sickening sound and sight!

While half unconsciously she sings again;
Her hands pressed on her heart, with eager strain,
As if to keep the fluttering mischief there,
From its last throb of anguish and despair.



JANET'S LAST SONG.

Is it true there are green fields far away?
Is it true there are sweet flowers growing?
Is it true there is sunshine on leaf and spray,
And kindly breezes blowing,
Where the mowers are mowing the sparkling grass,
Swiftly, before the sunbeams pass?

Is it true there are deep seas rolling wide,
And happier shores beside them?
And ships that are hastening with wind and tide,
And mariners bold to guide them?
Where the sailors are sailing, with laughter and shout,
Swiftly, before the tide runs out?

Is it true there are homes where wandering feet
 May enter and find a blessing?
Where pity is tender, and trust is sweet,
 And kills not while caressing?
And the lost ones are seeking that open door,
Swiftly, before it shall open no more?

Is it true there are skies of spotless blue
 In the far-off Heaven above us?
Where some are happy, that once we knew,
 And some that once did love us?
And the Angels are calling the blessed ones home,
Swiftly, before the night shall come?

Hark! a shriek the air is rending—
 Can it be—
That poor girl—her arms extending—
 Sinking on her prayerless knee—
Sinking, with her prayerless breath,
Down into the shades of death?

See them—how they gasp and shiver
Stand apart—
Dare not feel if yet one quiver,
Thrills around that broken heart!
Let it break. None ever cared,
While its anguish might be spared.

Dead she lies—her fallen beauty
Laid so low!
Who will come and do the duty
Of this last sad scene of woe?
Forth they rush, with hurrying feet—
Who will bring the winding-sheet?

Strangers' hands must come and bear her—
Quick—away!
None of all that band stay near her,
None in death's cold chamber stay—
Little chamber, dark and poor!
Hide her face, and shut the door.

Lonely chamber, sad and cheerless,
 Poor and mean;
Where that beauty, once so peerless,
 Lies untended and unseen,
Save by moonlight soft and fair,
Keeping silent death-watch there.

Not a shroud the world could find her;
 But the night
With its moonbeams softer, kinder,
 Robed her in a mantle white;
And its solemn chimes alone
Told a parting spirit gone.

Morn awakened, blythe as ever;
 Hurrying feet
Swept along with swift endeavour
 Hastening, time and tide to meet.
But no footstep tarriance made
Where that silent form was laid.

Loud the clang of eager voices,
Far and near.
Sounds that tell how life rejoices,
Rushed in tumult on the ear.
But no voice of all that host
Asked how Janet had been lost.



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